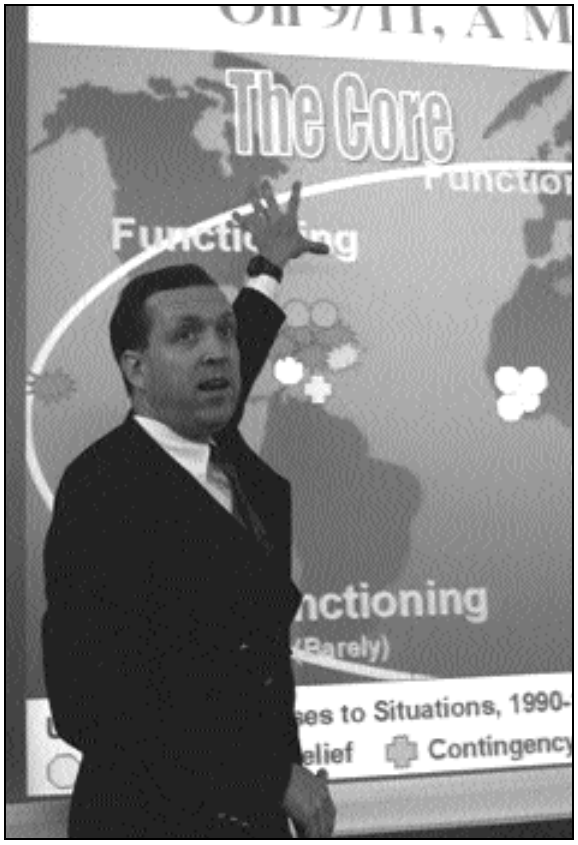

Thomas P.M. Barnett, assistant for strategic futures at the Pentagon's Office of Force Transformation

FROM THE INTERNET

BY DANIEL KENNELLY

Old habits die hard, and nations are apparently no exception to this rule. In the case of the United States, our habit, the Cold War, lasted almost half a century. In fact, so ingrained was this habit, and its doctrines of great power competition and "near-peer competitors," that only a catastrophic act of mass-casualty terrorism like September 11, 2001 could rouse the United States from the torpor of the 1990s.

Yet, while September 11 did awaken the United States from its strategic listlessness and prompted it to begin revising Cold War thinking, it did not immediately and clearly provide such a vision of the future to replace it—whether the question was considered in terms of economics, politics, or international security. That lot has fallen to countless pundits, experts, and government officials, who have searched for a new map that accounts for the new state the world finds itself in.

Dr. Thomas P.M. Barnett, the assistant for strategic futures at the Pentagon's Office of Force Transformation, has drawn a map of his own. The editors of *Esquire* put this new strategic map of the world on center stage ("The Pentagon's New Map," March 2003). An editorial in the same issue called it "the thinking that will guide our defense strategy" over the next decade, adding that "it's not just about disarmament."

DOUBLETHINK recently had the chance to meet with Barnett, who is also a senior strategic researcher at the U.S. Naval War College, and discuss the contours of this new map, its division of the world into a "Non-Integrating Gap" of failing states and a "Functioning Core" of globalizing states, and its implications for the military, security and economic future of the United States.

In your* Esquire *article, you introduced the idea of the "Non-integrating Gap." What is it and why does it matter?

The Non-integrating Gap began as a simple set of observations. First, you plot out on a map all the places where we've sent U.S. military forces since the end of the Cold War. Through 2002 that was 132 cases. Then you simply draw a line around roughly 95 percent of them, which, outliers aside, is basically the Caribbean Rim, the Andes portion of South America, most of Africa, the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Middle East, much of Southeast Asia, and interior China.

The question I was looking to answer was, "what is it about these countries that continues to demand attention from U.S. military forces?" Basically, these are the countries having trouble with globalization. Either they don't have sufficient rule sets in place to attract more direct investment, they suffer endemic conflict, they have repressive political leadership, or they suffer from a political system that restricts their contact with the rest of the world or limits it, say, to the export of a couple of raw materials like oil, diamonds, gold, or agricultural goods. And those countries have difficulty handling the content flow that even that limited connectivity brings them.

Give me an example of a country inside the Gap.

One of my favorite examples is Iran. Last year, Barbie, the doll, got kicked out of Iran. She began appearing on toy store shelves in Iran as part of the process of connecting to the world of global retail. Young Iranian girls bought her. The mullahs didn't like it. They came up with an anti-Barbie doll, covered from head to toe in black cloth. It did not sell like hotcakes, so our Barbie got the boot. Another good example is the Miss World competition they tried to hold in Nigeria last year. That was a disaster.

Both situations involved a clash of rule sets, or what Samuel Huntington would call a "clash of civilizations." The pattern holds for many countries in the Gap. There are a lot of ideas and concepts that are challenging to traditional societies because they say progressive things about the role of women, individual freedom, and the like.

How does this tie in with the map of U.S. military deployments?

When you put this package together and look at it, you come to the simple but stunning conclusion that, as I put it, disconnectedness defines danger. If you're looking for instability and threats to the functioning of the international system and the global economy, you're looking at this Non-integrating Gap. That's where you're going to find the transnational terrorist networks. That's where their interior lines of communication are found.

That's half of the map. What about the other half, the "Functioning Core?"

The "Functioning Core" is the bulk of the world's population—four billion out of six. Here, we're talking about North America, Europe, Russia under Putin's "dictatorship of the law," coastal China, Japan, India in a pock-marked sense, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Chile. These are the countries that are synchronizing their internal rule sets with the emerging global rule sets of democracy, transparency, free markets, free trade, and collective security. This doesn't mean that they line up perfectly. This doesn't mean that they buy into every aspect of it to the same degree. But it does mean that as you track them, they're moving more in that direction. As I said in *Esquire,* China is still ruled by a Communist Party, but China, by joining the WTO, is in effect importing rules that it can't create domestically.

But a lot of people still think of China as part of the problem, or as a potential threat to the United States.

For the longest time we've been planning on most of our big threats coming from big countries. During the Cold War, the Soviets had their own integrating chunk of the world economy, in which our rule sets didn't work, where our money had no value. Coming out of the Cold War, we searched for a "near-peer competitor." We managed to catch a rising China in the mid 90s largely because our attention was drawn to them by the Taiwan crisis and the build-up of their military in the '90s.

But this was really a very odd situation that only persisted strongly right up to September 11. Here was this country that was actively seeking integration with the global economy, that was actively synchronizing its internal rule sets with the rule sets we're promoting around the planet, and yet they're the ones we label as the "near-peer competitor." Every war game we conducted, every expert we hired, was about China. A lot of people here in the Pentagon were saying the future of conflicts and danger and threats was in Asia.

All that got wiped off the map after 9/11. For me it crystallized a sense that globalization is the real struggle right now. We have a tendency to think about globalization in terms of a binary outcome—success or failure. But that's not reality. Show me where it's spreading and where it's deep, and I'll show you the Functioning Core. Show me where it hasn't spread or where it's thin, and I'll show you the Non-integrating Gap. The places in the Gap are the ones where we've sent military power over the last twelve years.

How specifically should the Pentagon retool its force structure to address shrinking the Gap?

There are a variety of arguments. One of the first things you notice is that since the end of the Cold War, you see roughly about 150 major bases that we have shut down throughout the Core.

That's Europe and East Asia?

Right. And you've seen something like twenty to two dozen bases and counting added since the end of the Cold War inside the Gap, the bulk of them in Southwest Asia.

Second, when you throw that shape up on the wall, the military guys look at it and they say, "In effect, that's our expeditionary theater for the 21st century." One of the first problems you run up against—and they've run up against this in the global war on terrorism—is the problem of several cooks working on the same brew. That area encompasses the same areas of responsibility for Southern Command, European Command, Central Command, and Pacific Command.

One of the ways that this has been dealt with, I would argue, is very typical of the transformation directives we see from Secretary Rumsfeld. He doesn't try to tackle existing institutions in a head-on fashion. Instead, he points to some new or existing entity that's being used in a new way and says, "Go be more like that." For instance, one of the things that came out of that initial look was Secretary Rumsfeld telling Special Operations Command, "You are going to get a functional slice of this universe. You are going to take the charge in the global war on terrorism." That's a big signpost for the force structure changes that come about as we move further down this line. When you think about Special Operations Command, you're going to try to be more pre-emptive and preventive than retaliatory, so you're going to see a lot more emphasis on "sensors."

What do you mean by "sensors"?

The United States can't be the cop car screaming in with sirens blaring, because everybody's going to be screaming "Five-O in the neighborhood!" By the time you get there, all the bad guys are going to be gone. Another way of saying it is that it puts a premium on forward deterrence, rather than the more heavy posture the military has focused on over the last dozen years. We want to be able to be somebody who's known in the neighborhood. We want to be able to think more like a local, and that means that we need to develop local intelligence networks.

This really speaks to a different sort of hub structure. The hubs that we had during the Cold War were more

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focused on the Mediterranean and Northeast Asia. The hubs we're going to see now are going to be much more focused on the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and especially the eastern side of Africa. You're going to see a lot more attention devoted to developing urban combat abilities, because these guys are going to try to hide from us.

If we live in an environment in which we face, as Thomas Friedman put it, "super-empowered individuals," then we have to make our individual soldiers as super-empowered as possible, too. We will push for a smaller military footprint in the world, but every boot we put on the ground needs to be as networked and as wired up as possible, so that our soldiers have maximal capabilities in terms of situational awareness and the ability to set up in real time whatever targeting needs to be done.

We saw a lot of these changes at work in Iraq, right? Especially with the speed of the advance.

But we like to distinguish between different levels of speed. This is part of the confusion that occurred as people tried to interpret what we were doing as the war unfolded. You can talk about speed at three different levels. We always want to have great tactical speed for our platforms, because that's what keeps individual soldiers alive and that's how you win individual skirmishes.

Then there's operational speed, the next level up. I call that Wayne Gretzky speed. Gretzky was by all accounts the greatest hockey player of all time, but not the fastest skater. He was asked, "Why are you so good?" He replied, "I don't skate to where the puck is. I skate to where the puck will be." We emphasize that as emblematic of this network-centric warfare. Everybody who is on the ground has to be as wired up as possible, because we always want to be moving toward where the puck will be, not chasing after where it is.

Now, on a strategic level, distinguished from those other two, speed is not of the essence. We saw that in Iraq with the emphasis on inevitability rather than speed. Here, you saw the bumping out of the Powell Doctrine of overwhelming force. What seems to be emerging in its place, a Rumsfeld Doctrine, if you will, stresses high agility, great lethality, and a network-centric approach to warfare.

You saw the merging of that, in many ways, in Iraq, in the first half of the war as we moved pieces into place in a "checkers phase," where we seem to be moving square by square. Then once we got everything set up around Baghdad, we moved into the "chess phase," where you saw deep movements, very complex movements where we were not trying to fight in an onslaught, head-on fashion—our pawns versus their pawns. Instead we took our best assets and in a very rapid and synchronized fashion removed Saddam's big pieces. So it wasn't the great pacification of Baghdad that some had feared, with block-by-block fighting. Instead it was more like us snatching Saddam's crown jewels one by one, and then the opposition realizing that resistance was futile and basically dropping off the map.

In terms of military means, then, we've been putting our house in order, but it's been suggested that pre-emptive war to, as you put it, "shrink the Gap" might in this case be medicine worse than the disease that we're trying to cure. Isn't there a danger that this strategy will provoke or hasten the rise of a peer competitor or a hostile coalition of states opposed to us?

We have this concept that we call "system perturbation." It's a different way of thinking about international crises. Basically it's any sort of dramatic "vertical" shock to the system, followed by any number of "horizontal" waves. With 9/11, the vertical shock was put on us, and then we had to deal with a wide variety of horizontal shock waves. We had shockwaves pass through the insurance industry and the transportation industry, for example. We had the additional shock of the anthrax scare, and you saw us scrambling over the subsequent weeks and months to issue all sorts of new rules that you could have argued we needed months or years prior. It took a cataclysmic event to force us into adjusting our rule sets.

The Bush Administration has looked at the Middle East and seen that this is a situation that hasn't improved itself at all in terms of its security situation over the last thirty years. Economically it has even deteriorated. The region accounted for much more of the world's exports twenty years ago than it does now. It attracted much more foreign investment twenty years ago. It's actually losing economic connectivity over time, and the political-military instabilities persist. What the administration is trying to do in Iraq is take the bull by the horns. The international system is very interconnected, and so the nations of the Core always risk being put on the defensive as the result of a terrorist attack.

Evidently this is especially true for a country like the United States, which is better suited for shaping the environment rather than acting as a status quo player.

In that case, doesn't it make more sense for us to be the system perturber? So what we're trying to do in the Middle East is apply the vertical shock to the system ourselves. The perversely shocking image for a big chunk of that region is watching television and seeing Marines march unopposed through Baghdad. That image has created a host of future potential power plays that were inconceivable till that happened. First and foremost, obviously, is the transformation of Iraq, if not into democracy, which may be a bit too optimistic, then at least a more pluralistic country connected to the outside world in such a way that they can't ever again be pushed into isolation.

How will this demonstration affect others in the region?

We obviously hope that it will cut off a lot of negative behavior, say, in Iran or Syria, which support Hamas or Hizballah and thus creates tension and pressures in the West Bank and Israel. We also hope it will encourage political reforms in other places like Saudi Arabia. We are really trying to turn the tables in many ways. When Osama picked 9/11, he put us on the defensive, and he makes us scramble to create all sorts of new rules to push us in the direction of Fortress America, which is a direction we really don't want to go.

> "Withdrawing from the world would, for one thing, put at risk the integration of developing Asia that's been going on over the last twenty years. That's the baby you don't want to throw out with the bathwater in the global war on terrorism."

But why isn't Fortress America an option? Wouldn't withdrawing from the world make us safer from terrorism?

No, it wouldn't. We live a very good life under globalization. In effect, it allows us to live beyond our means. We export sovereign debt and we import far more than we normally would. One of the reasons why countries put up with that arrangement is because we export security. This process provides collective growth in a reasonably fair and equitable manner. To pull out from this system is to leave nobody minding the store.

This process isn't inevitable. Globalization has suffered serious setbacks in history. There was a tremendous period of globalization in history from roughly 1875 up until 1914, which was then picked up again after World War I and continued till about 1929. That whole situation went away because of the economic nationalism of the 1930s and the conflagration of World War II. There's nothing that says that we can't screw up this globalization today, so the option of pulling out of the Middle East is not a good option.

What would happen if we did pull out?

It would really put at risk, for one, the integration of developing Asia that's been going on over the last twenty years. That's the baby you don't want to throw out with the bathwater in the global war on terrorism. Almost half the world's population is in developing Asia. They already take more than 50 percent of the oil that comes out of the Persian Gulf. That percentage is slated to rise fairly dramatically to upwards of 70 percent, as some predictions have it, by 2020. So if you pull out of the Middle East, you put that source of energy at risk, and that's risking throwing away the tremendous accomplishments in Asia of the last 20 or 30 years.

Over the longer term, my concern is that as we move from combustion to hybrids to fuel cells, global oil demand will top out. As soon as that happens, when the clock is really ticking for OPEC and the Middle East in general, then the Middle East's hold on our national security attention will begin to wane. It could easily go down the same pathway as sub-Saharan Africa. Then we wouldn't want to deal with it at all, so we would put a big fence around it and write it off. I worry about that because that is roughly a billion people, a billion and a half by 2020, and I don't want to see that go the same pathway as Central Africa. Instead, by 2020 or 2030 I want to see the economic transactions that occur between the Middle East and the rest of the world involve a whole lot more than just energy, and that means we have to stay in the region.

The strategy you are describing is very active, and it depends a lot on the staying power of U.S. public opinion. September 11 did provide a lot of staying power to public opinion, at least for the time being. What is going to be required to maintain that level of focus?

We were lulled into such a sense of strategic security across the Cold War because we had Mutually Assured Destruction, or existential deterrence. This said that America can't really be put at risk, because to put America at risk is to put the entire world at risk. Nobody was willing to do that. There was also the Soviet Union, which could be held responsible for its actions.

Things are different now. When you're fighting against functional nihilists like al Qaeda who see your way of life as anathema to everything they hope and dream about the future, you're not going to be able to deter these people. The pure "away game" that we saw in play through the Cold War and thought we were playing in the early post-Cold War evaporated with 9/11. All of the sudden, people drew lines of connectivity between overseas action and danger at home.

One response to this situation has been that we shouldn't do anything overseas because we don't want to create any danger or fear here. The peace movement on the Iraq question really did try to exploit that. The flip side of that equation, though, is that if people can't feel secure at home, they're going to give this and future administrations a much freer hand to seek out and to reduce what dangers exist abroad. The American public understands that we can try to catch every terrorist, or take down their leaders like you take down mafia leaders, and that that will work up to a point—but only up to a point. If you make the case to the American public—and they're capable of understanding a fairly sophisticated argument on these terms—they'll understand that you don't want to just fight a war of attrition against terrorism, you want to get at the endemic conflicts that breed terrorism.

So much international terrorism does come out of the Middle East. So much of it is based on the Israel-Palestine conflict. So much of it is based on anger toward authoritarian and repressive regimes that are not adapting to globalization but instead encouraging young people to dream of different pathways that lead to greater isolation for their countries over time. When you see that most of the terrorism that we're dealing with comes out of that section of the world, and I think the public is sophisticated enough to see that, then you see that it's not enough to try to catch every terrorist at the border. The public understands that the only way to make the terrorism issue go away is by eradicating the conflicts, tensions, and lack of opportunities that drive young men in the Middle East to lash out against us.

You seem to be operating under the assumption that these non-integrating areas can somehow be convinced to turn themselves around and head in the right direction.

I don't like to put it in terms of "hearts and minds." I don't believe in changing people's minds, and I don't believe you can impose democracy. What I do think you can do is encourage connectivity. When you encourage connectivity, you allow people more choices for information, for expression, for economic opportunity. I trust connectivity to lead countries down the pathway toward pluralism a whole lot more than I trust imposing some sort of fabulous constitutionalism from above. I don't dream of democracy in the Middle East so much as I dream of more connectivity between that public and the outside world. Once you have that sort of connectivity, it's very hard to shut it off. You see economic opportunities percolate into demands for political pluralism over time. You see that in China already. All we need to do in situations where this kind of connectivity is emerging is to prevent the rise of those who seek to disrupt that connectivity or take particular countries or regions off-line.

Conversely you have to seek to keep down those people who already have countries or regions held hostage in a semi-isolated situation. It's no surprise that the axis of evil countries tend to be some of the most isolated countries. They hold their own people back, but they also hold back other countries in the neighborhood that fear being called, say, a "bad Islamic state" or a puppet of the United States. It's not an exhaustible problem. You've got to stop those who want to destroy what connectivity exists and you have to unleash those populations that are held in isolation, because their dissatisfaction tends to extend beyond their own borders.

You could also say that the history of the period before World War I shows that connectivity itself produces its own stresses, and that those have to be managed as well.

Absolutely. But the difference between this globalization and the last one, as those in the Core know, is what great power war can do in a nuclear-armed age. So the efforts of a country like the United States to shrink the Gap can be pursued without the fear of the whole thing unraveling into a very destructive great power war. But any sort of integration or rise in connectivity is always challenging because it typically involves the integration of more modern parts of the world with more traditional parts of the world. Connectivity gives choice, and that choice challenges traditional power structures. And most traditional power structures, which are survival networks for hard economic times or in harsh economic environments, are rigid. So any religion you find in the Gap, you'll find in its most fundamental form. But this kind of friction is better than the kind of friction you see when a state tries to keep the world at bay. That never works.

What we want to see in these countries are governments that can foster connectivity but be strong enough to channel and deal with it in such a way that their societies don't feel like they're drinking from a fire hose. The Shah didn't do that in Iran. China, on the other hand, has been very skillful. They're letting the world in, but they're letting it in on their terms, without ripping up traditional structures.

We have to be patient.